

MARXISM
an introductory course
in five parts

**The aims of
the Communist
Party**

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COURSE I

THE AIMS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Lesson I

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

1. The Series

This Course is the first of an introductory series on Marxism, the theory on which the Communist Party bases its practical activity and policy. Later courses will deal with Capitalism, the Working Class Movement, Socialism and Democracy, and Marxist Philosophy.

Each course is self-contained, but is related to the others; and where a point is more fully dealt with in another course there is a note to that effect. The courses are so arranged that it will be possible to start with any of them, thus enabling the tutor or the

group to select the particular course most suited to their own interests and approach to the subject. It should be emphasised, however, that the series is a whole, and, although the order may be varied to suit different groups, it is desirable that all courses should be worked through.

2. Method

Each course will consist of four lessons, and is designed to be used either with a tutor or by a group without an official tutor. In the latter case a comrade should be elected to lead the discussion—a good idea is for a different comrade to be selected for each meeting.

3. The First Course

In this course we are going to examine the aims of the Communist Party. Not only its ultimate aims, the kind of society we want eventually to bring into existence, but also the stages in achieving that aim and our immediate policy.

4. The First Lesson

The first lesson should begin with a brief account of the purpose of the course and its relation to the series as a whole. Most of the time, however, should be devoted to a general discussion during which

comrades should be asked to state the reasons which led them to join the Party and what were the actual circumstances under which they joined. Comrades should be invited to comment on and criticise in a friendly fashion the reasons revealed in this way. While the discussion should be very general, care should be taken to see it does not get led away by too many red herrings. At the end, the tutor should generalise the experience of the comrades and sum up by showing how what led them to join the Party was in one way or another dissatisfaction with the capitalist society in which we live, and the desire for a better kind of society.

Lesson 2

OUR COMMUNIST AIM

1. What Is Our Aim?

The aim of the Communist Party is to build Communist Society. This aim is shared by all Communist Parties throughout the world, although the immediate questions and problems facing these Parties may be very different. Whatever the stage of the struggle, the policy of all Communist Parties is guided by their understanding of the scientific

theories of Marxism, which are to be discussed in these courses.

2. What is Communist Society?

Communist society will be very different from the society we know in Britain.

(i) In the first place Communist society will be a classless society, in which all the means of producing wealth are owned in common. Instead of being divided into workers and employers, rich and poor, society will be an association of free people, all making their special contributions to the wellbeing of society, which in return will supply them with what they need in order to live full and happy lives. Such a society can be summed up in the slogan : " From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

(ii) For this to be possible, Communism must be based on abundance. Production will be organised in such a way that there is plenty of everything for everybody : not only food, houses, railways, and so on, to satisfy material needs; but also schools and theatres, playing-fields, books and concerts, so that people can lead full, physical and spiritual lives.

(iii) Communist society will be international. It is not something which can be fully completed in one country, isolated from the rest of the world. On the contrary it must eventually embrace all the peoples of the world; and in so doing it will put an end to war.

(iv) It is obvious that by the time such a stage of human development has been reached many institutions which we accept today as essential, such as policemen and prisons, employers and workers, armies and civil servants, will have disappeared. Because no wars can take place in a truly international society there will be no need for armies. Because it will be a community of plenty, where there is enough for all and therefore no advantage can be obtained by theft or other forms of crime, all need for courts of justice and police will have disappeared. In other words, the State, which is the sum of all these institutions and organisations, will itself disappear. Instead of one section of society ruling and oppressing another, men will have grown accustomed to living together in society without fear and compulsion. Thus, for the first time, mankind, united in a world-wide family of nations, will be free to devote all its creative energies to completing the mastery of nature.

(v) Such a society implies tremendous changes in people themselves; not only in their economic position, but also in their whole moral and intellectual outlook. For instance, work, instead of being simply a means of earning a living, will have become the natural expression of men's lives, freely given according to their abilities. Moreover, the nature of work will itself have changed. Through the development of science much of its drudgery will have disappeared and every man and woman will develop their mental and physical capacities to the full; and this will inevitably bring about changes in their moral outlook. Morality will have ceased to be merely a personal question, and people will have grown accustomed to accepting their duties and responsibilities to society as a moral obligation.

Such changes in society and in people cannot, of course, be brought about overnight, or even in a generation. Between society as we know it in Britain today and the full development of Communism, there will be a transitional stage, Socialism, which is the subject of the next discussion. As we shall see, this stage is necessary not only in order to create the material plenty, which is the basis of Communism, but also to acquire the new moral

and intellectual outlook we have spoken of; the self-seeking outlook generated by capitalist society will be replaced by the social outlook created by a higher type of social organisation.

3. How Society Changes

It is often argued that, however desirable such a Communist Society may be, it could never be made to work, because, whatever changes are made in the form of society, human nature will always remain fundamentally the same: there must always be rulers and ruled, rich and poor, employers and employed. This argument springs from ignorance of the facts.

The study of history, and the observation of primitive communities still living in the world, prove that in the earliest kind of society not only were the land and the tools (what are called the means of production) regarded as the common property of the tribe, but every one shared in the common tasks of production and defence, as well as in the product of their labour. Because of the low level of technique such communities were necessarily extremely primitive and poor, but because there was common ownership, and therefore no classes, they are correctly described as "primitive Communism."

Gradually, however, as mankind achieved greater mastery over the forces of nature through increased

technical skill, work in common gave place to specialisation. As a result, society began to be split up into classes : on the one hand the many, who carried out the actual work of production; on the other the few, who, because they owned the land and tools, laid claim to what was produced as their private property. Since they could only maintain this right by force, society ceased to be directed by a common purpose and a common interest, and instead was rent by continual class struggle.

Nevertheless, this division of society into classes, though it created exploiters and exploited, rich and poor, was a necessary and progressive stage in the development of mankind. It made possible the full development of the technical advance, the improvements in the means of production, that had brought it about. Without slave labour the achievements of ancient society would have been impossible; and these achievements in turn laid the basis for the next great technical and social advance, feudalism. Under feudalism, instead of being divided into slaves and slave-owners, the two main classes in society were the feudal lords who owned the land and the serfs who tilled it. It was still a system of exploitation, but the method of exploitation had changed. The feudal lords, though they could still force the serfs to work for them part of the time, did not own them as slaves, so that the serfs could spend the rest of their

time in working for themselves.

But technical development did not stand still. Improved technique led to the development of new methods of production, and, therefore, to the appearance of new classes, the capitalists and the factory workers. Feudalism in turn was replaced by a higher stage of society, capitalism; the stage in which we are living today and which, in spite of all the suffering it has caused, has, nevertheless, led to a greater advance in wealth and knowledge than all the previous stages of society put together.

4. How Did Socialism Become a Science?

It was this discovery by Karl Marx (1818-83) and Frederick Engels (1820-95) of the causes and nature of the class struggle that laid the basis for the science of Socialism. Before them there had been many people who had been appalled by the suffering caused by capitalism and had dreamt of and fought for a better world. But these early Socialists, because they attributed poverty and exploitation to the wickedness and greed of individuals, sought to reform these abuses by appealing to men's conscience rather than by changing society itself. And even today there are still many sincere men and women in the Labour movement who hold this view.

Marx realised that in the earlier stages of class

society the exploitation of the vast majority by a small privileged section, and the class struggles resulting from that, were unavoidable because of the low technical and productive development. Now, however, capitalist society has led to such a tremendous improvement in technique and to such a vast increase in the productive forces that there is no longer any need for the division of society into classes. Moreover, by explaining how the capitalist class exploits the working class (see Course 2), Marx was able to show that the very existence of the capitalist class, instead of helping forward the development of the productive forces, is now increasingly hindering such development.

It follows, then, that the next step forward in the development of human society can only be taken by the working class, organised in trade unions and co-operatives and led by a political Party whose policy is based on this scientific understanding of the class struggle. By taking this step, the Socialist Revolution (see the next lesson in this Course), the working class, being itself the great majority of the people, will end the exploitation of man by man, and lay the foundations for Communist society.

5. Is the U.S.S.R. a Communist Society?

Marx and Engels did not live to see their theories

carried into practice. Nevertheless, it was only by applying and developing their theories that the Bolshevik Party in Russia, under the leadership of Lenin (1870-1924) and Stalin, was able to lead the workers and peasants to victory in the first Socialist Revolution in the history of mankind. This experience has proved that the theories of Marxism are scientific theories. It does not, however, follow that the U.S.S.R. is yet a Communist society. Capitalist exploitation and the capitalist class have been destroyed, and the first Socialist society has been built up. But, as has been said above, Socialism is only a transitional stage; the first, or lower, stage of Communism. In the next lesson we must, therefore, examine it in greater detail.

FOR DISCUSSION

(a) *What are some of the main dangers of war in the world today, and how can these dangers be removed?*

(b) *Can you, from your knowledge of history, give examples of human nature being changed by different forms of social organisation?*

(c) *What do you mean when you say that a theory is a scientific theory?*

Lesson 3

SOCIALISM

Socialism cannot arrive from nowhere. It can only develop on the basis of the conditions existing in the previous form of society. Because it is a transitional stage, we should expect it to have similarities both with the capitalist society out of which it has arisen, and with the Communist society into which it is developing. Remembering what has been said of Communism, it will help us to understand this if we consider the main feature of capitalism and Socialism in the same order.

1. Capitalist Society

(i) Capitalist society is a society divided into two main classes: the capitalists, or bourgeoisie; and the working class, or proletariat. The former own the land, the factories and the machines, and all the means by which wealth is produced (the means of production), and are therefore the ruling class, though they do no productive work themselves. The latter though they do all the real productive work of society, own neither the means of production nor the wealth they create; and, therefore, are forced to sell to the capitalists their ability to

work and produce. Numerically, the capitalists are an insignificant minority, while the workers constitute the vast majority of the people.

(ii) Capitalism is not based on plenty. Though it has developed, for the first time in history, the possibility of providing enough for everybody, it has always condemned a great part of the people to live in poverty and insecurity. This is because the capitalist class, who decide what is to be produced, base their decisions not on what people need but upon how much **profit** they will make when the goods are sold in the market.

(iii) Capitalist society is not a peaceful, international society, but, on the contrary, nationalist in a narrow, selfish way. Just as within each capitalist country the various capitalists and groups of capitalists compete with each other in order to sell their goods at a greater profit, so capitalist countries as a whole enter into competition with other capitalist countries. This competition inevitably leads to wars: on the one hand to enslave more backward countries; and on the other, to redivide the countries which have been enslaved between the different capitalist countries. Such wars are not in the interests of the working class, but only of the capitalists.

(iv) Because capitalism is a class society, in which the small class of monopoly capitalists exploits the great majority of the people—not only the workers, but also the professional and technical workers, and the small farmers and shopkeepers—it is necessary for the capitalists to impose their will upon the people. It does this, partly by filling all the key posts in the armed forces, the Civil Service and all legal institutions (that is, in the State) with members of its own class; partly through its control of the Press, the films and so on, by which public opinion is influenced.

Thus, while in a capitalist democracy it is true that the majority of the people have the opportunity of taking part every few years in the election of the Government and of the local authorities, and in addition have won a number of democratic rights such as the right to organise in trade unions and political parties, freedom of the Press, etc., nevertheless the real power of the State remains in the hands of the capitalists. The strength of this power has been shown in fascist countries, where the capitalists, threatened by the growing strength of the working class, were able to sweep away all the people's democratic rights.

(v) Under capitalism, as we have seen,

human society is condemned to a series of bitter struggles; class against class, nation against nation, and individual against individual. Inevitably, therefore, the great majority of the people, instead of being inspired by a common social purpose, are forced to struggle for their own individual and selfish interests. Moreover, since capitalism condemns the majority of people to poverty or insecurity, there is a continual waste of human talent and ability.

2. Socialist Society

(i) The first and fundamental contrast between Socialist and capitalist society is that under Socialism all the means of production and exchange—the land, factories, machines and banks—are publicly owned. Thus the exploitation of one class by another is ended. Instead of one small class being able to live on the labour of the majority of the people, everybody is obliged to undertake some form of productive or administrative work on behalf of society as a whole.

(ii) Under Socialism, production is organised to meet the needs of the people and not to provide profit for a single class. It will, therefore be possible to plan production; and so to increase

enormously the amount produced. Since at first there will not be enough to meet the needs of everybody, as there will be under Communism, people have still to be encouraged to work hard by being paid according to the amount and quality of the work they do. Thus, though exploitation will be ended for ever, there will still be inequality as between one person and another.

(iii) The U.S.S.R. is the proof that it is possible to build Socialism in one country or group of countries. The fact that within the U.S.S.R. there is no longer oppression of one nation by another means that the first step towards a truly international society has been taken. But so long as the greater part of the world remains capitalist the conditions that cause war, either between various capitalist countries themselves or between them and the Socialist country, still exist. Only as Socialism is developed in more and more countries do the chances of war breaking out become less, thus creating the basis for the international society of Communism.

(iv) As under capitalism, but in contrast to Communism, the State is still necessary under Socialism. It will, however, be a very different

kind of State, since it must express the power of the working class and not of the capitalists. It is necessary, first, in order to break the power of the capitalist class; secondly, to carry forward the education of the mass of the people to the full understanding of Socialism; thirdly to protect the Socialist country from outside capitalist interference.

The Socialist State, however, represents a tremendous development of democracy: not only because its authority is derived from the great majority of the people, the working class, instead of from the small capitalist class; but also because it consciously aims to draw more and more of the people into the running of their own affairs, and, in so doing, to train them to undertake full social responsibilities. In this way it is preparing the way for the disappearance of the State under Communism (see Lesson 2 above).

(v) It is clear, then, that from the point of view of people themselves Socialism is also a transitional stage. With the ending of exploitation people's attitude to work will change; instead of being merely a means of living it will become a necessary part of a new kind of social living. Similarly their attitude to property will

change, family life will take on a new significance, etc.; and with these changes a new code of morality will develop. Clearly these changes will be gradual, but how long they will take will depend partly on the level of social development the mass of the people have been able to achieve under capitalism; partly on whether the Socialist country is able to develop without the savage and brutalising interference of war.

3. How does Socialism come into Existence?

With the development of capitalism certain inevitable changes take place in it. Industry, instead of being organised in innumerable small competing units, is gradually concentrated in bigger and bigger enterprises under the control of fewer and fewer (though still competing) monopolies. At the same time, with the growth of mass production, production itself is continually being broken down into more and more separate processes. This means, on the one hand, that the production of every single article that is made involves the work of a growing number of workers; production, that is to say, is becoming more and more socialised. On the other hand, because of the tendency to monopoly, **ownership** is continually being concentrated in fewer hands.

The economic basis for Socialism, therefore, is

already being created under capitalism. But we cannot begin to build Socialism while the capitalist class can use the power of the State to maintain its private ownership of the means of production.

Before Socialism can begin, this power must therefore be transferred to the working class; and this transference of power is the first step in the Socialist Revolution. How this can be achieved will certainly differ considerably in different countries, and the question will be discussed in greater detail in a later Course in this series (No. 4). But two things are clear. First, it cannot take place unless it is the will of the majority of the people, and except under the leadership of the organised working class. Secondly, it will not be enough simply for the working class to win a majority of seats in Parliament; until the machinery of the State is controlled by the working class, power will remain in the hands of the capitalists.

This is why no amount of reforms of capitalism bring Socialism any nearer, unless they are accompanied by a continual strengthening of working-class organisation and power.

FOR DISCUSSION

(a) *Can you give examples of inequality in the Soviet Union, and explain the reasons?*

(b) *How does this differ from inequality in capitalist society?*

(c) *Does the victory of the Labour Party in Parliament mean that the working class has won power in Britain?*

Lesson 4

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND LABOUR'S PROGRAMME

So far, in the first three lessons, we have considered the Communist society we eventually want to build and we have shown why Socialism is a necessary stage on the way. We have seen that before we can build Socialism power must pass effectively from the capitalist class into the hands of the working class, in order that private ownership of the means of production and the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists may be ended once and for all.

Now we must examine the immediate policy of the Communist Party and its relation to the struggle for Socialism. Broadly speaking, our policy is to support the Labour Party in carrying out the programme which was endorsed by a majority of the British people in the General Election of June, 1945.

1. What is Labour's Programme?

The Labour Party published its election programme in a pamphlet called *Let Us Face the Future*. It states that the people need food, work and homes, a rising standard of living, improved social services and security abroad; and it puts forward practical proposals for attaining these ends.

(i) **Jobs for All.** The Labour Party consider the following measures necessary to ensure Full Employment: (a) Full use to be made of all our resources of land, material and labour, and production to be increased; (b) Good wages, improved social services and insurance, and a shifting of taxation from the workers to the rich; (c) Investment in essential industries and the social services to be planned by a National Insurance Board, and the location of new industries to be controlled; (d) Nationalisation of the Bank of England and some government control of the other banks.

(ii) **Nationalisation and Control of Industry.** In addition, the Labour programme provides for the nationalisation of certain key industries (Fuel and Power, Inland Transport, Iron and Steel) on the basis of fair compensation to the present owners; public supervision of monopolies and cartels; and some measure of State control over

the remaining four-fifths of industry by means of control of raw materials and of investment and prices, as well as by Government bulk-purchases and subsidies.

(iii) **Homes.** The building industry to be organised under Government supervision to enable the Local Authorities to provide the largest number of houses and flats for letting to working-class families. The purchase of building materials to be centralised. The procedure for the compulsory acquisition of land needed for housing at reasonable prices to be improved.

(iv) **Social Services.** The Education Act of 1944 to be brought into full practical effect, opportunities for leisure time activities and healthy recreation to be increased. The scheme of Social Insurance to be extended and improved on the basis of the Beveridge Report and a free, inclusive National Health Service to be provided.

(v) **Foreign Affairs.** Germany and Japan to be deprived of all power to make war again. The wartime partnership of Britain, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. to be preserved as the keystone of the United Nations, whose purpose should be to keep the peace, to remove the causes of war, and to ensure economic progress and a

rising standard of living for all people throughout the world.

With regard to the British Empire and Commonwealth, while working for full co-operation with the Dominions, India to be given responsible self-government and a policy of planned development of the Colonies to be undertaken, accompanied by increasing democratic control by the Colonial peoples of their own countries.

2. Is This a Programme of Socialism?

As far as Britain is concerned, Labour's programme consists of a number of essential social reforms combined with plans for modernising and controlling industry. It corresponds to the immediate democratic needs of the British people, but even its complete fulfilment will not give us Socialism. The resulting social system will be one of partial State capitalism. The ownership of about one-fifth of industry will pass from the capitalists to the State, but while these capitalists will be deprived of direct control of an interest in the nationalised industry, they will continue to draw interest on the State bonds which they will receive as compensation. The remaining four-fifths of industry, though under a measure of government control, will still be owned

by the capitalists. Thus the old basis of exploitation will still remain and a large proportion of the labour of each worker will still be spent in providing an income for a class of persons who add nothing to the process of production themselves.

3. Why do Communists Support Labour's Programme?

Before the war, the biggest obstacles to progress towards Socialism were the armed Fascist dictatorships in Europe and their supporters among members of the capitalist class in this country, in France, and the U.S.A. Opposed to them were the Soviet Union and the working class in the capitalist countries, weakened partly through lack of organisation, but mainly by the division between the Communists and the other working-class parties.

Victory, however, has brought about fundamental changes in the relative strengths of the two classes. Fascism has been utterly discredited and suffered severe military defeat, even though its complete eradication is still one of the main political tasks of the United Nations. The Soviet Union has emerged as one of the "Big Three" powers, playing a dominant part in world affairs by reason of its military and political strength. All over Europe, new democracies have arisen in which the working-class parties, the Communists and the Social Democrats (similar

to our Labour Party), work in close association. In Britain, for the first time, a Labour Government has been elected with a majority of seats over all other parties in the House of Commons. In other words, the position of the capitalist class has been substantially weakened throughout the world, including Britain, and working-class forces have been correspondingly strengthened.

Not only is Labour's programme adapted to the immediate needs of the British people at the present time, but, to the extent that the Government enlists the aid of the entire organised Labour movement in carrying it out, it will also have the effect of still further weakening the capitalists' position and strengthening the workers. The stronger the working class becomes, and the weaker the capitalists, the less difficult and costly will be the eventual taking over of real power by the workers and the building of Socialism.

The political task before the Communist Party is twofold: (1) to ensure the continued weakening of Tory influence; the Tories still had 10 million votes at the election, and it is essential to win large numbers of these to the working-class standpoint; (2) to develop among the workers who are already anti-Tory a more developed class consciousness, and to win the best of these for the Communist Party.

This combined task requires action in support of Labour's programme, and at the same time criticism and pressure wherever the Government is taking measures which weaken the fight for the programme (for example, paying excessive compensation, putting big capitalists in charge of nationalised industries, raising charges for day nurseries, etc., as well as in foreign and colonial policy).

4. How Does the Communist Party Support Labour's Programme?

In supporting this limited programme, the Communist Party never loses sight of its ultimate aims, discussed in Lessons 2 and 3. The teachings of Marxism, on which our policy is based, help us to look at every event from a working-class standpoint and not to be taken in by capitalist propaganda. Wherever the Labour Government shows signs of modifying its programme in order to make capitalism work more smoothly, instead of pushing it vigorously ahead in the interests of the working class, we shall not only criticise, but we shall also do our best to mobilise the working-class movement against such tendencies.

This has already been necessary on a number of issues, particularly those connected with foreign policy, as for example Greece, Spain, Indonesia, where

Communist views are shared by large numbers of the Labour Party and trade unions.

If the Labour Party had accepted the affiliation of the Communist Party, it would have been possible for the Communist Party to raise and discuss these questions in Labour Party Conferences, etc., so that the Left standpoint would get a democratic hearing. Moreover, as an affiliated body, nationally and locally, the Communist Party could have mobilised the masses more effectively in support of Labour's positive programme.

As things stand now, the fight for unity must take the form of unity of action with Labour people on every issue that arises, on which we can mobilise the people for action.

In the struggle for improved wages and conditions, for housing, for a democratic Spain, etc., the Communist Party can both win Tory voters to support Labour, and raise the class consciousness of Labour supporters. In doing so it must continually strive to improve its own organisation and to educate its whole membership in a fuller understanding of the principles of scientific socialism.

FOR DISCUSSION

(a) *On what conditions is nationalisation in the interests of the working class?*

(b) *Can you explain some of the ways in which the Labour Government proposes to control those industries which are not to be nationalised?*

(c) *Can you, from your own experience, give examples of how unity of action between Labour people and Communists strengthens the working class?*

NOTE.—Discussion leaders will find it helpful in taking the course to study:

“What Is Marxism?” by Emile Burns
(especially Chapters 1, 2 and 6).

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